



GUARDIAN & FIREBRAND DR. FATE & THE SHADE • THE DEMON

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METROPOLIS ISN'T MY USUAL HAUNT, I'M MOSTLY A BIG APPLE BOY...

...BUT WHEN WORD OF THE GANG OF WILDLY MARAUDING TEENAGERS TEARING UP SUPERMAN'S HOMETOWN, REACHED ME, I HAD TO COME.

—ONLY TO VANISH BACK INTO THE CITY'S SHADOWS BEFORE THEY CAN BE STOPPED, OR QUESTIONED.

FOR TWO WEEKS, THESE SAVAGE KIDS HAD BEEN SWEEPING OUT OF THE NIGHT ON ERRANDS OF APPARENTLY RANDOM DESTRUCTION—

GET AWAY FROM THOSE KIDS, YOU FREAK!!

I GOT LUCKY MY FIRST NIGHT AND FOLLOWED THE GANG TO THE METROPOLIS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM... AND DISCOVERED I WASN'T ALONE IN MY MISSION...

GREAT IT WAS THE GUARDIAN, ONE OF THE OLD GUARD HEROES...

...AND THANKS TO THIS HORROR-SHOW FIREBRAND RIG, I MUST'VE LOOKED SO NOT LIKE ONE OF HIS LODGE BUDDIES.

WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER TO FIGURE OUT THE STORY HERE. WE SHOULD HAVE GONE AFTER WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE.

AND WE WOULD... AS SOON AS WE WERE DONE WITH THE...

FIGHT SCENE.

THE DEVIL'S OWN

BRIAN AUGUSTYN - SCOT EATON - PRENTIS ROLLINS
writer penciller inker
DAVE GRAFE - KEN BRUZENAK - CHRIS DUFFY
colorist letterer assistant god
FRANK PITTARESE editor

Firebrand created
by Brian Augustyn
& Sal Velluto

HE SLAMMED INTO ME
LIKE THE B.L.15 OUT OF
LARCHMONT, AND I KNEW
I WAS IN FOR A LONG
NIGHT.

Unnnngg-!

KATANG!

BACK OFF,
GUARDIAN! I'M
ON THE JOB--
JUST LIKE YOU!

KLASH!

I DON'T
KNOW HOW YOU
KNOW MY NAME,
FLAME-FACE...
...BUT IF YOU
KNOW WHO I AM, YOU
KNOW I'M NOT GOING
TO LET YOU HURT
THOSE KIDS!

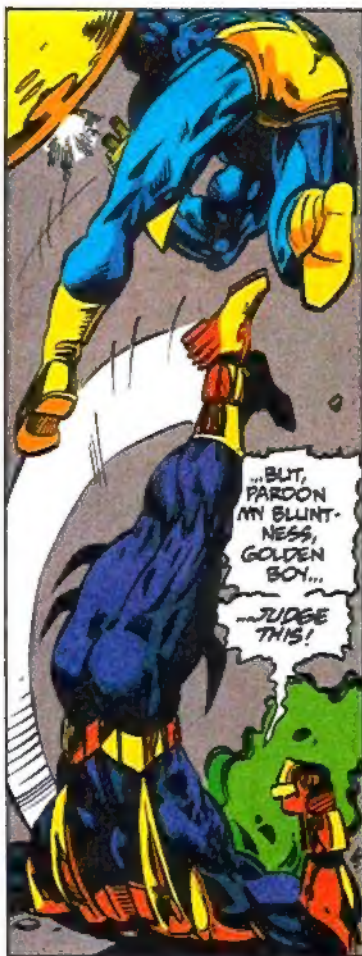
THWAMP

THERE'S
GOT TO BE SOME-
ONE BEHIND THESE
KIDS' MINDLESS
WILDING...

...AND
FORGIVE ME
FOR JUDGING A
BOOK BY ITS
BLAZING COVER,
BUT YOU'RE THE
BEST CANDIDATE
I SEE!

SPILL
IT!

I'M...TELLING YOU
STRAIGHT, PAL, AND
TRYING REAL HARD
TO STAY POLITE...







OKAY...
KEEP IT COOL,
GENTLEMEN.

Ummmm...



THAT ONE'S
OKAY, HE'S
GUARDIAN...

THAT GUY,
THOUGH, HAS
GOTTA BE THE
SUPER-VILLAIN!



WELL?



NO
PROBLEM,
GUYS,
HE'S WITH
ME.

UM, THANKS
FOR THAT IN THERE,
WHAT MADE YOU
DECIDE TO
BACK ME?

I'M NOT
SURE
WHY, BUT
I BELIEVE
YOU.

OTHER
THAN OUR
WARDROBES,
I THINK
WE'VE GOT
A LOT IN
COMMON.

I DON'T WORK THE
STREET MUCH ANYMORE,
BUT I'VE GOT A SOFT
SPOT FOR CHILDREN
THAT GOES WAY
BACK.

I HATE TO
SEE ANY KID GO
WRONG, HOT-
HEAD.

PLEASE
CALL ME
FIRE-
BRAND...

...AND WE DO
HAVE A LOT IN
COMMON.

AND I
THINK WE
BOTH AGREE
THAT
SOMEONE'S
TAKING
ADVANTAGE
OF THESE
KIDS.

LET'S SEE
IF WE CAN
PICK UP A
TRAIL...

"...AND SMASH
WHATEVER RAT-
BAG WE FIND
AT THE END."

The Inferno
Hot Spot Disco

WHAT'S
TAKING SO
LONG?
WHERE ARE
THEY?!

BLASTED
MIND-SLAVES...
DO WHATEVER YOU
COMMAND, BUT YOU
CAN'T MAKE THEM
RUSH.

MEANWHILE,
I'VE GOT A
LIMITED WINDOW
OF MYSTICAL
OPPORTUNITY
THREATENING TO
SLAM SHUT
AT ANY MOMENT!

THIS
IS WHAT I
GET FOR
USING
INFERIOR
TOOLS!

WHOA!
WHA!
WE GOT
HERE?







THAT'S SOME IMPRESSIVE... EFFECT YOU'VE GOT THERE, FRIEND.

IMPRESSIVE, AND A LITTLE DISTURBING, AS WELL.

YOU OUGHTTA TRY IT FROM IN HERE...BUT I THINK THAT'S THE INTENT...

...YOU KNOW, "STRIKE FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF EVILDOERS," AND ALL THAT.



OF COURSE, I SEE A SIGHT LIKE THIS AND MY HEART FREEZES WITH TERROR.

MY GOD.

THOSE KIDS DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING. HOW DO WE STOP THEM WITHOUT HURTING THEM?



NO. HOW DO WE DO IT WITHOUT HURTING US?!



UFF!

SHEESH! ARE YOU OKAY, FIREBRAND?

I'M FINE, BUT WE'D BETTER GET SOME HELP FOR THE GANGSTAS WHO GOT SQUASHED BY THAT TEEN MOB...

I'LL CALL IN A GUY AND-

GUY? YOU ON THE JOB, GUARDIAN...? ARE YOU A COP?

I-WAS-A LONG TIME AGO, IN A DIFFERENT LIFE, YOU?

LIKE THE SONG SAYS "IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL..."



...TOO SMALL TO KEEP US FROM THE SKELL WHO STARTED ALL THIS...

RETURN TO ME, MY CHARGES, BRING ME MY PRIZE!

I HAVE RITUALS TO PERFORM, A DESTINY TO FULFILL... DARK GODS TO APPEASE!

HURRY, MY CHILDREN! HURRY!!



THERE THEY GO--
INTO THAT PARK.

I THOUGHT THEY'D
BE TOUGHER TO TRAIL
THAN THIS.

IN THE PAST
COUPLE OF WEEKS,
THEY'VE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE
TO FOLLOW...

...IF THEY'RE
NOT BEING CAREFUL
ANYMORE, SOMETHING
MUST'VE CHANGED.

MAYBE
WHOEVER SENT
THEM OUT
DOESN'T NEED
THEM AFTER
TONIGHT--

--AS IF
WHATEVER IS GOING
ON IS COMING TO A
HEAD--AND SOON!



THEN, IF
WE'RE GONNA
SHUT THIS DOWN
AND SAVE THOSE
KIDS, WE'D BETTER
HURRY!

OH,
SURE,
PIECE OF
CAKE...



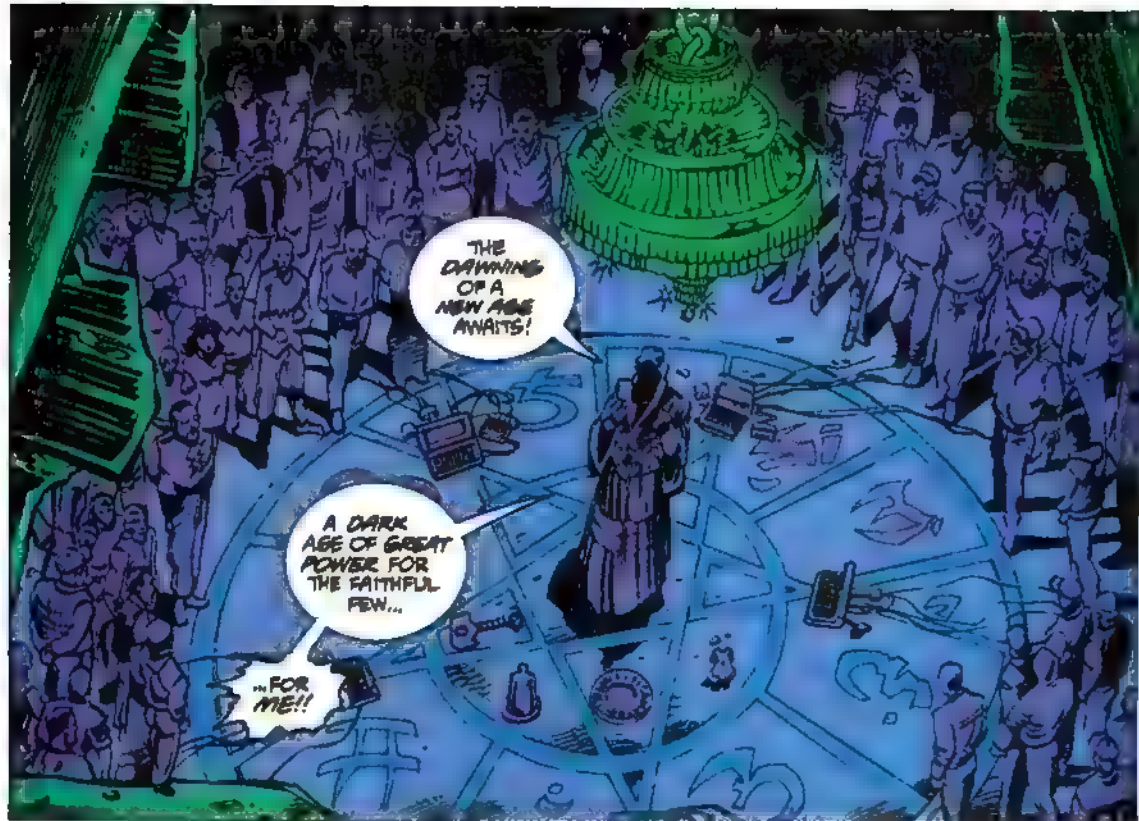
...WHAT
COULD BE
EASIER?"

SUPERSTO
Always Get Your



COME,
MINIONS!
ENTER FREELY--
OF MY OWN
WILL!

BRING
ME THE TRIBUTE
THE DARK
POWERS
DEMAND!



THE FINAL
RITUAL WILL BRING
THE OLD ONES
HERE TO COLLECT
MY FINAL
TRIBUTE...

...MY
GIFT OF
YOUR
SOUL!

THEN I
WILL BE ~~EMPOWERED~~-
AND NO ONE WILL EVER
MISS A BUNCH OF LOWER
CLASS LOSERS
LIKE YOU!

NOW
TO PROGRAM
THE LAST
SPELL
SEQUENCE...

THIS IS...
BAD!
LET'S GO!!

RIGHT
BEHIND YOU,
FIREBRAND--
LET'S CRUSH
THIS LITTLE
DEVIL!

RIGHT--
GIVE 'EM
HELL!!



WHAT?
INTERRUPTIONS?



NO
MATTER, THE
PROGRAM IS
RUNNING--
NOTHING CAN
STOP IT
NOW!!

LEAST
OF ALL A
PAIR OF
SAUDY
GROWN-
UPS!

—GRRR!!



CAN'T BUDGE
THESE KIDS--AS IF
THEY'RE BOUND
IN PLACE BY THAT
WEIRD ENERGY!

FOOL--
THEY ARE
MINE TO DO
WHATEVER
I WILL!!



AND I
WILL THEM
TO DELIVER
YOUR
DEATHS!

KILL
THEM!





I WRITE THIS
AS A MEANS OF
ANALYZING WHAT
HAPPENED THEN.

THOUGH YEARS HAVE PASSED,
I SEE NOW THAT THE OCCURRENCES
OF THAT DAY RESONATE STILL
IN RECENT EVENTS, AND I FEAR
THAT THEY MAY BE OF EVEN
MORE CONCERN IN EVENTS
YET TO TRANSIRE.

THE HERO I
MET AND FOUGHT
ALONGS DE THEN,
IS DEAD.

I STILL THINK OF HIM OFTEN,
THOUGH, NOW, PERHAPS, JUST
PERHAPS, IT WAS HIS LIGHT
THAT TOUCHED ME IN SOME
WAY, AND SLOWLY SO BEGAN
THE CHANGE IN MY MORALITY
IF NOT TO WHITE... AT LEAST
TO A SLIGHTER, LIGHTER
SHADE OF GRAY.

PERHAPS.

WHATEVER, LET
ME FINALLY RECORD
THE EVENTS THAT
MYSELF AND THE
HERO SHARED.

WHICH BEGAN,
IRONICALLY, WITH
MY... "ENCOUNTERS"
... ANOTHER HERO...





YOU SHOULD COME TO TERMS WITH THE OBVIOUS, FLASH.

I AM THE EMBODIMENT OF DARKNESS. HAVE YOU ANY IDEA OF THE POWER THAT BRINGS?



THE GANTT 2015 I'D CONSTRUCT WERE EASILY OUT-MANEUVERED. I KNEW THEY WOULD BE.

YOU ARE ONE, LONELY, RUNNING MAN. NOW CAN YOU HOPE TO COMPARE?

BUT WHERE WOULD THE SPOT BE IN HAVING A SHADON WRAITH TEAR BARRY ALLEN APART? LET HIM THINK HE A FOOL, LIKE COLD AND TOP AND GOOD. LET HIM STOP THIS ELABORATE GALA OF PROPS AND GIMMICKRY NOW! SO THAT BY NIGHT, MY STEALTH MIGHT GO UNSEEN AS I MADE AWAY WITH WHATEVER REAL PRIZE I COURTED.

THE ONLY THING I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT CHARADES SUCH AS THESE...

YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT, SHADE.



BUT WHAT IF THE RUNNING MAN ISN'T SO LONELY?

... WERE THE KNOCKS. SOME OF THEM HARD.

AND OH, WHEN ~~MY FRIEND~~ THE KNOCKS GOT HARDER, AND I FEARED HIM MORE. HE WAS A LITTLE SLOWER, TRUE, BUT WISER WITH IT.

I FEARED HE'D ONE DAY SEE THROUGH THE RUSE. IN FACT I HALF SUSPECT HE DID...

... BUT CHOSE TO ENJOY IT FOR THE GAME THAT IT WAS.



AH, TWO FLASHES.

TWICE THE THREAT TO ME? HARDLY.

MERELY DOUBLE THE DEFEAT FOR YOU.



NOW I PREPARE TO FACE MY--

I'D SPEND HOURS PRACTICING BLATANT LINES LIKE THAT, PRACTICING TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE.



WOW, GAY.
I'VE GOT TO
SAY I'M
IMPRESSED
WITH HIS
ESCAPE.

MMM,
IS THAT
WHAT IT
WAS?

I
WONDER.



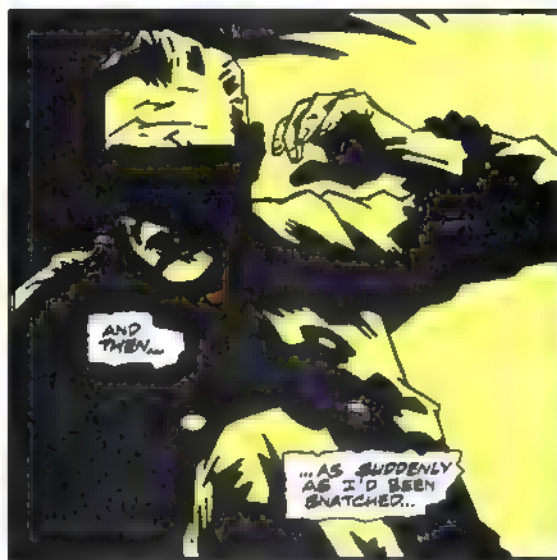
INDEED.
I WONDERED
TOO.

WHERE
I WAS.

WHO HAD
BROUGHT ME
HERE.



I WANTED
ANSWERS.



AND
THEN...

...AS SUDDENLY
AS I'D BEEN
SNATCHED...

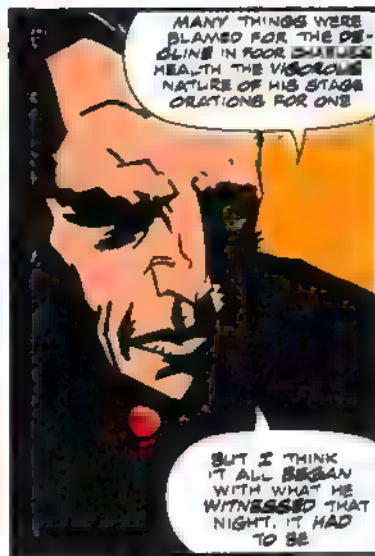
... I REALIZED
I WAS GOING TO
GET THEM.

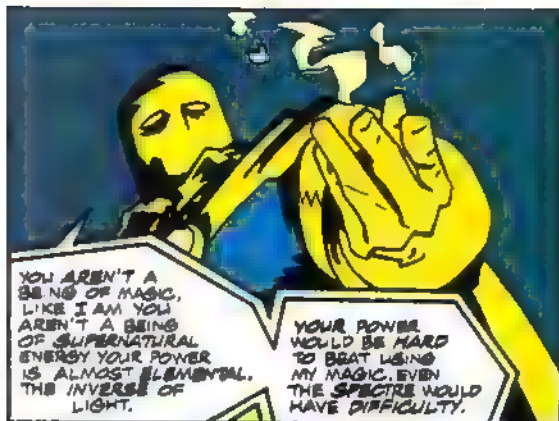
FEAR
NOT SHADE.
I MEAN YOU
NO HARM.

REALLY?
OH, I AM
RELIEVED.

THE SHADES AND ROSEAL
IN THE DEPTHS OF THE PAST
DAY & NIGHT.
NIGHT & BRIGHT

JAMES ROBINSON - WRITER
MATT SMITH - ART
MELISSA EDWARDS - COLORIST
CHRIS ELIOT/OLAS - LETTERER
CHUCK KIM - EDITOR





YOU AREN'T A BEING OF MAGIC, LIKE I AM. YOU AREN'T A BEING OF SUPERNATURAL ENERGY. YOUR POWER IS ALMOST ELEMENTAL, THE INVERSE OF LIGHT.

YOUR POWER WOULD BE HARD TO BEAT USING MY MAGIC. EVEN THE SPECTRE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY.



REALLY. HOW REASSURING. THOUGH IF THIS IS YOUR WAY OF INTIMIDATING ME BEFORE WE FIGHT, I MIGHT SUGGEST A SHIFT IN STRATEGY.

I DON'T INTEND TO FIGHT YOU, SHADE. YOU WILL HELP ME.



OH, WILL I INDEED. WITHOUT A PLEASE OR THANK YOU. YOU'LL HAVE TO BE MORE ALLURING THAN THAT IF YOU WANT MY AID.



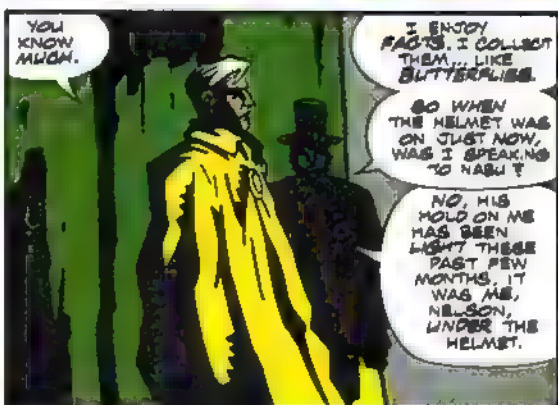
AND TAKE OFF THAT SILLY HELMET I KNOW YOU'RE KENT NELSON. I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.

REALLY? WHAT DO YOU KNOW?



DR. FATE, CRIME-FIGHTING SCORBER... FOR WANT OF A BETTER DESCRIPTION.

KENT NELSON, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST AND WHEN YOU DON THE HELMET YOU'RE STILL NELSON SOME OF THE TIME. BUT SOMETIMES YOU'RE NABU, EGYPTIAN WIZARD, AND MYSTICAL SPIRIT LORD OF SOME TYPE OR OTHER.



YOU KNOW MUCH.

I ENJOY FACTS. I COLLECT THEM... LIKE BUTTERFLIES.

SO WHEN THE HELMET WAS ON JUST NOW, WAS I SPEAKING TO NABU?

NO, HIS HOLD ON ME HAS BEEN LIGHT THESE PAST FEW MONTHS. IT WAS ME, NELSON, UNDER THE HELMET.



WHERE'S YOUR WIFE? I'VE HEARD THAT SOMETIMES THE STRAIN OF BEING FATE MAKES YOUR MARRIAGE FRAIL.

NOT NOW. WE HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES IN SALEM. INZA'S OFF TAKES NO CARE OF THEM. HAVING THE TIME TO ACCUMULATE PROPERTY IS ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF NOT AGING.

AS YOU WOULD WELL KNOW.



SO I'VE TOLD YOU WHAT I KNOW. NOW WHAT DO YOU KNOW? AND WHY SHOULD I CARE AT ALL?

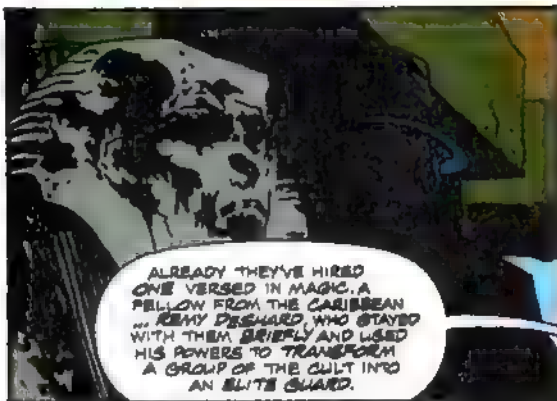


THERE IS A CULT, THE WISE FOOLS, WHO HAVE COME TO SALEM. I WOULD HAVE THAT THEY LEAVE IT.



THEY PRACTICE ARCAINE RITUAL, FROM THE DARK PAST.

AND THEY WOULD USE WHATEVER NEW POWER THEY MIGHT GAIN FROM IT, FOR EVIL.

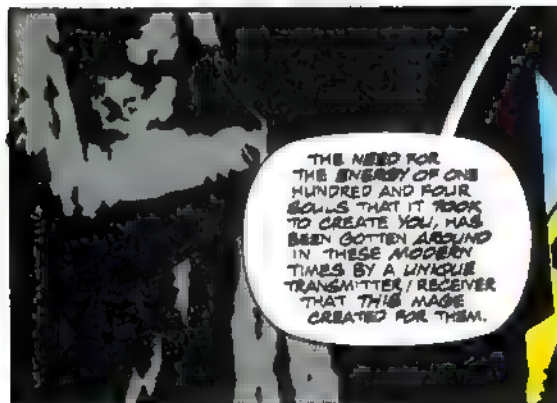


ALREADY THEY'VE HIRED ONE VERSED IN MAGIC, A FELLOW FROM THE CARIBBEAN... REMY DESHARD, WHO STAYED WITH THEM BRIEFLY AND USED HIS POWERS TO TRANSFORM A GROUP OF THE CULT INTO AN ELITE GUARD.

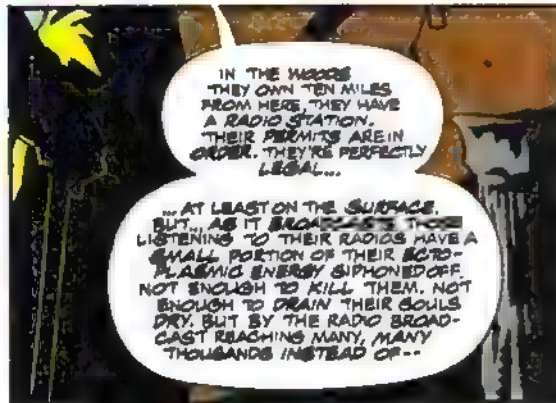


DESHARD IS GONE, BUT NOW THEY'VE BROUGHT IN ANOTHER, ONE WHO HAS KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR ORIGIN AND THE MAGIC NEEDED TO PERFORM IT.

THEY'VE HIRED HIM TO MAKE A DIFFERENT GROUP OF THE CULT WITH YOUR POWERS.



THE NEED FOR THE ENERGY OF ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR SOULS THAT IT TOOK TO CREATE YOU, HAS BEEN GOTTEN AROUND IN THESE MODERN TIMES BY A UNIQUE TRANSMITTER/RECEIVER THAT THIS MAGIC CREATED FOR THEM.



IN THE WOODS THEY OWN TEN MILES FROM HERE, THEY HAVE A RADIO STATION. THEIR PERMITS ARE IN ORDER. THEY'RE PERFECTLY LEGAL...

...AT LEAST ON THE SURFACE. BUT, AS IT BRAGGARTS, THOSE LISTENING TO THEIR RADIOS HAVE A SMALL PORTION OF THEIR SCOTCH-FLAMING ENERGY SIPHONED OFF, NOT ENOUGH TO KILL THEM, NOT ENOUGH TO DRAIN THEIR SOULS DRY, BUT BY THE RADIO BROADCAST REACHING MANY, MANY THOUSANDS INSTEAD OF...



ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR.

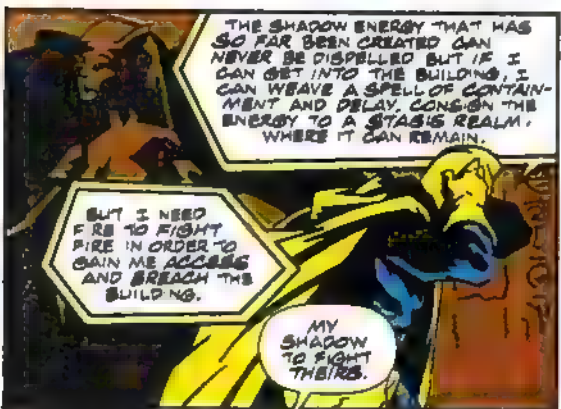
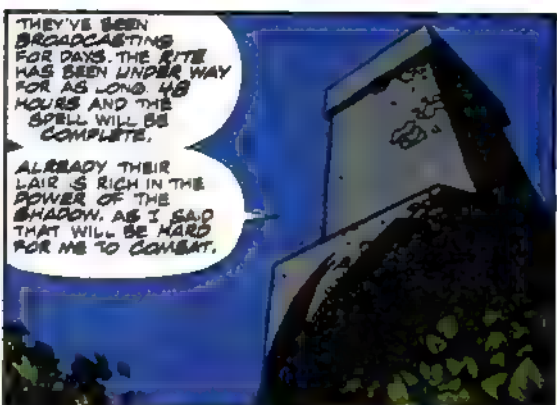
EXACTLY! THEY HAVE THE POWER TO RECREATE THE SPELL THAT MADE YOU. WITHOUT THE DEATHS THAT MIGHT DRAW ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY'RE DOING, IT WILL BE TOO LATE GOOD, AND NO ONE IS AWARE OF THEIR INTENT.

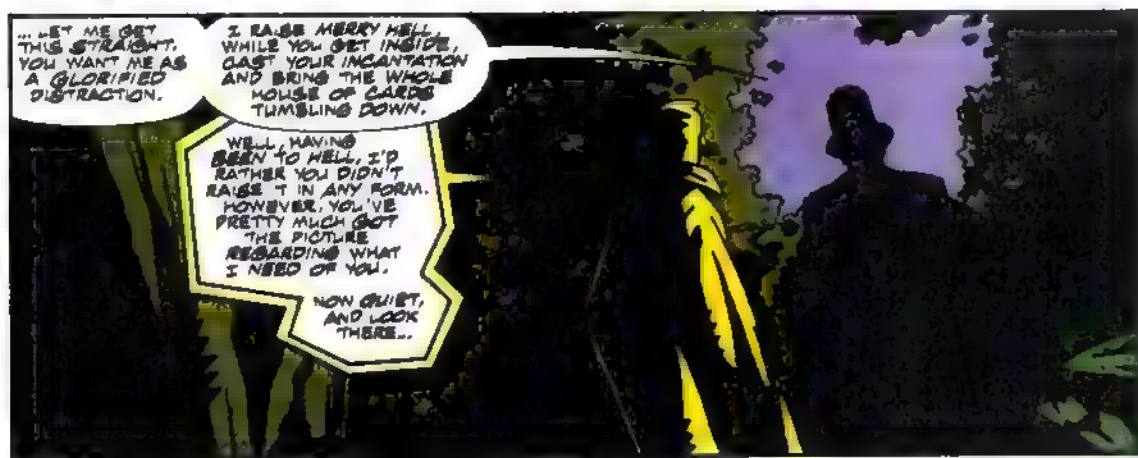
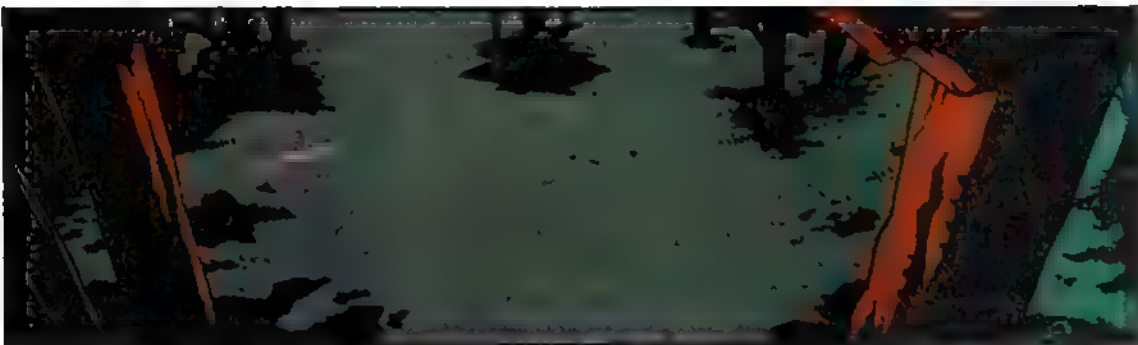


EXCEPT YOU.

BUT HOW DOES THIS MAGIC KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT MY CREATION?

HOW? WHY, IT WAS HIS CREATION TOO.





"IT'S WHAT'S
INSIDE THAT
MATTERS."

AND WITH
THAT...

...WE BEGAN
OUR DESCENT.

TO BE
CONTINUED...



LONDON, ENGLAND.
THE PRESENT



IN THE YEAR 560 A.D.,
JASON BLOOD WAS
HAPPY. HE LOVED HIS
WIFE AND HIS CHILDREN
DEARLY. HE HAD ALL
HIS TEETH.

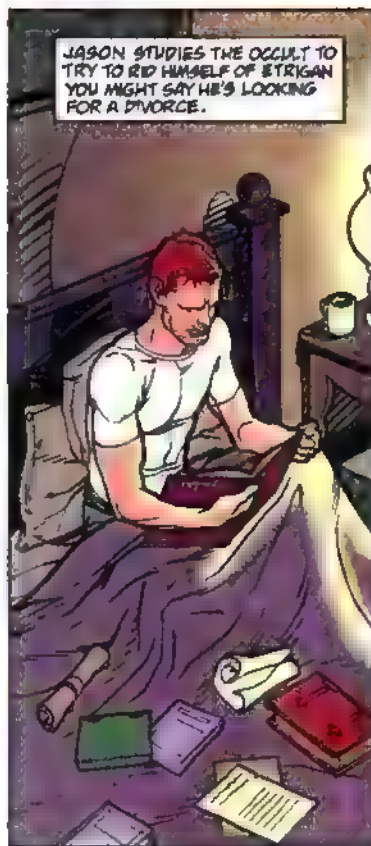
THEN MERLIN BONDED
THE BLACKHEARTED
DEMON ETRIGAN TO
HIS SOUL.



WHAT???
HOW DID I...



THE
DOOR'S OPEN?
DID I SLEEP
WALK?



JASON STUDIES THE OCCULT TO
TRY TO RID HIMSELF OF ETRIGAN
YOU MIGHT SAY HE'S LOOKING
FOR A DIVORCE.




BECAUSE, YOU SEE...


...MY
WIFE...

...WHERE
AM I?






SUCH
BLUSTERS AND FUZZ,
AND ALL OVER WHAT?
I DID NOTHING TO GET
YOU TO THE PLACES
YOU GOT.



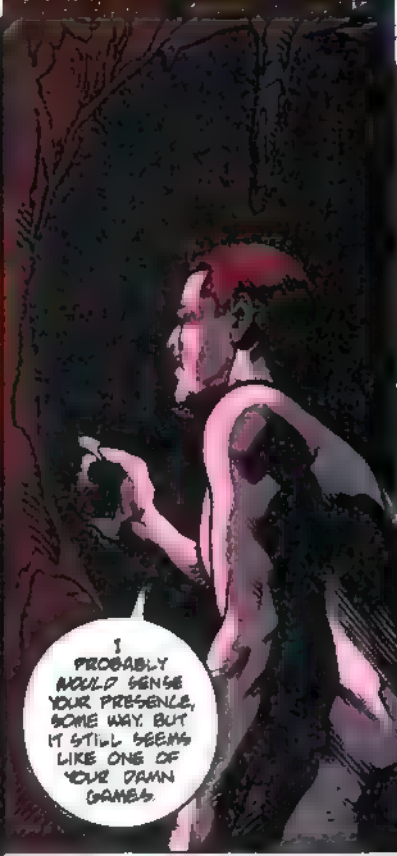
DON'T PLAY
INNOCENT WITH ME,
STRIGAN. THIS REEKS
OF YOUR SCHEMING.
WHAT DID YOU DO
TO ME?

RECK, SO
YOU SAY, BUT
THINK OF IT,
NOW--IF I WAS
INVOLVED, YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE
TO ASK
NOW.




HE SEES THERE'S
A MYSTERY, AND WANTS
TO BLAME ME. HE'S LOOKING
FOR ANSWERS, BUT I'M
NOT THE KEY.

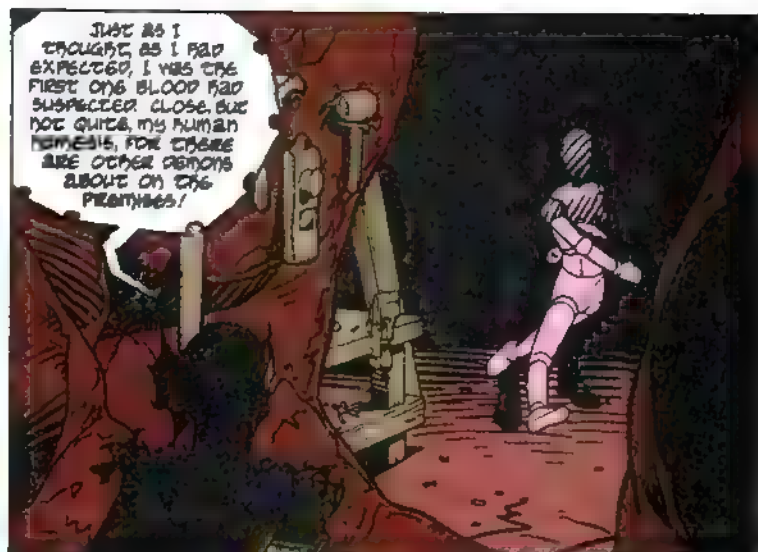
IF IT
WAS MY DOING,
YOU'D SENSE MY
HAND, YOU'D WAKE
SMELLING BRIMSTONE,
YOU'D KNOW OF
MY PLAN.



I
PROBABLY
WOULD SENSE
YOUR PRESENCE,
SOME WAY. BUT
IT STILL SEEMS
LIKE ONE OF
YOUR DAMN
GAMES.



WHAT'S
LIKELY, FRIEND
BLOOD, WHAT YOU
DON'T WANT TO FACE,
IS YOU'RE LOSING
YOUR MIND, AND
YOU'RE A DEAD
CASE.



JUST AS I
THOUGHT, AS I HAD
EXPECTED, I WAS THE
FIRST ONE BLOOD HAD
SUSPECTED. CLOSE, BUT
NOT QUITE. MY HUMAN
NEMESIS, FOR THERE
ARE OTHER DEMONS
ABOUT ON THE
PREMISES!



I ASKED YOU,
FRIEND BOLIVER,
TO COME UP WITH
A WAY OF MAKING
BLOOD'S BODY
DO WHAT I
SAID...

THIS
MARIONETTE IS OUR
VOODOO DOLL, BUT IT'S
MAGIC MAGIC, NOT MINE.
THAT MAKES HIM OUR
TROLL!

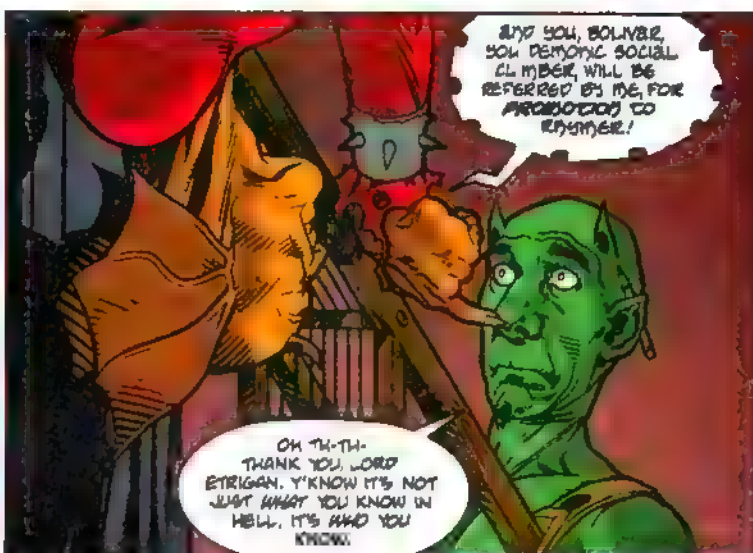


BLOOD'S HELD HIS GRIP
TIGHT, KEPT ME IN PERDITION,
EVEN STOPPED ME FROM KILLING
WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION.



I WANT
THE CONTROL,
I WANT THE
POWER

I'M SICK
OF BLOOD'S
MEDDLING, IT'S
MAKING ME
SOME



AND YOU, BOLIVER,
YOU DEMONIC SOCIAL
CLIMBER, WILL BE
REFERRED BY ME, FOR
PROTECTION TO
OTHERS!

OH TH-TH-
THANK YOU, LORD
ETRIGAN. Y'KNOW IT'S NOT
JUST WHAT YOU KNOW IN
HELL, IT'S HOW YOU
KNOW.

BLOOD'S SOLUTION IS STUDY-
PSYCHOLOGY, MYSTIC TEXTS,
NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS.



HE TRIES NOT TO THINK
ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT
HE'S LOSING HIS MIND.



YET, IF HE HAS, WHO
WOULD KNOW BETTER
THAN HIS UNWILLING
SPOUSE?

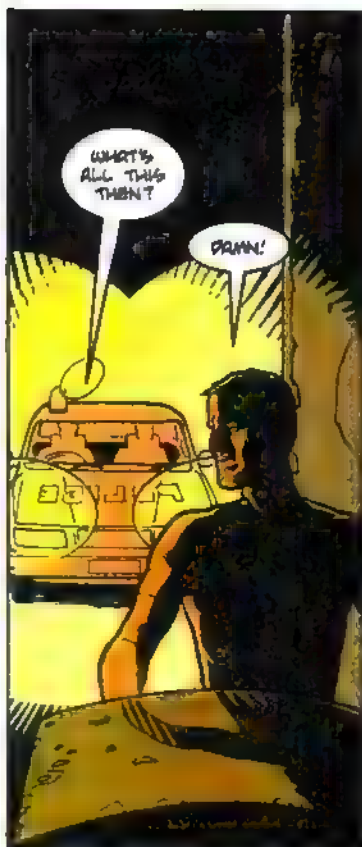


—OH
NO—NOT
AGAIN—

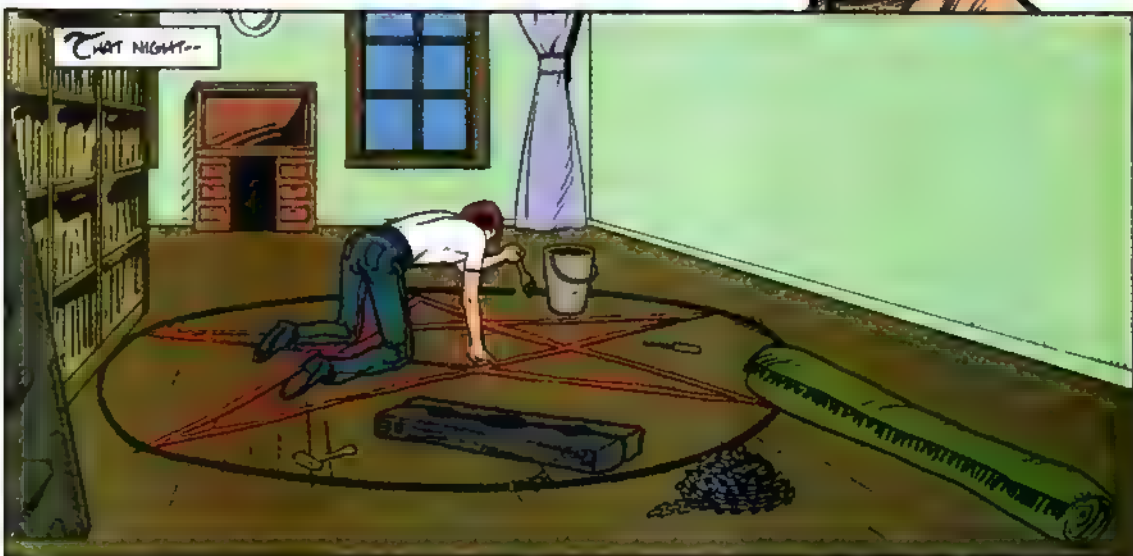


WHAT
HAVE I
DONE???













THE
"PUPPETMASTER," I
PRESUME? THE ONE WHO'S
DOING ETRIGAN'S DIRTY
WORK FOR
HIM?

OH
NO~ I C-C-CAN
EXPLAIN!
REALLY!



WITH ONE
TINY STEP I
WILL~

YEEAARRGGGG!

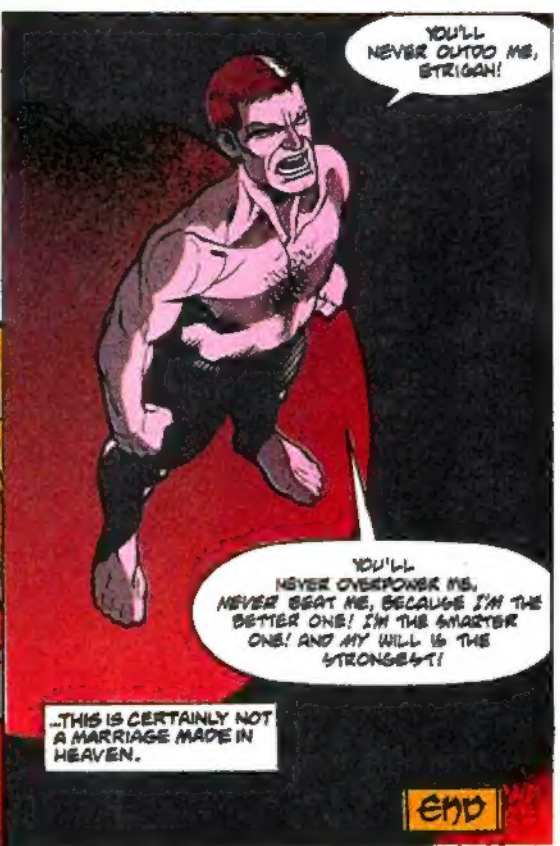


GO AHEAD,
ETRIGAN! LAUGH AT
THAT SPELL OF
CONTAINMENT!



NOOOOO!

WELL...



YOU'LL
NEVER OUTDO ME,
ETRIGAN!

YOU'LL
NEVER OVERPOWER ME,
NEVER BEAT ME, BECAUSE I'M THE
BETTER ONE! I'M THE SMARTER
ONE! AND MY WILL IS THE
STRONGEST!

...THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT
A MARRIAGE MADE IN
HEAVEN.

END

CASE STUDIES

All right. It was overwhelming. We here at Case Studies had no idea how many fans Garth....er....Aqualad...I mean Tempest has out there. Without a doubt, the most popular and eagerly-awaited story of the issue was "Charted Courses," finally letting readers know what happened to Garth. Well, there's a lot more. This is just the tip of the iceberg. More on this later. Let's get to the mail!

Dear Jason,

A new year, a new SHOWCASE edition, and a bunch of new and entertaining new features. If SHOWCASE '96 #1 is any indication of what's in store for the rest of the new year, I'd say this year's edition could just as well stand a chance when it comes to topping last year's incredible set of fascinating short stories presented in these pages.

"Friends, Foes, and the Other Guys," was an interesting story to kick off the new year. Not only was it a sight for sore eyes to see the always awe-inspiring artwork from the capable hands of Sergio Carullo again, it also felt good to get another taste of Beou Smith's writing style. Somehow, during the past months, most of the stories he's written have been able to tickle my fancy in quite a number of ways, and this story was a good way to see him flex some muscle again. As for the choice of characters, I'm rather happy with Steel and rather unhappy with Guy Gardner. The love for the former almost equals the feeling of dismay concerning the latter. Somehow, Guy has never been able to convince me that his character is more than just a one-dimensional fighting machine. Still, the team-up with Steel might open me up a bit for Guy, so you never know. For now—benefit of the doubt.

"Charted Courses," was the story I waited many months to see. Ever since the mystery surrounding Aqualad started in the pages of AQUAMAN, I have been on the edge of my seat. Not knowing what happened to him was slowly driving me nuts, until, of course, Phil Jimenez and Scott Kolins teamed up to bring the readers this very story—in itself a great and entertaining story, but the ramifications for the main Aquaman continuity are more important, I feel. Therefore, I'm glad Garth has been reestablished as an active character in the DC Universe. Let's see more of him in these pages too, if you will.

Finally, "All the Old Familiar Places" turned out to be a nice short story about Dan Turpin. Not only was it good to see the old man in action again, the tale also served as an intelligent way to bring Nara and Dan somewhat closer together. While I've never heard of the creative team of Ciencin and Robinson before, their work is quite good,

making for a good way to end the first issue's worth of new and exciting features.

Next up is Circe? Exactly what I wanted! Geez! What are you guys—mind readers?

Olav Beemer
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Yes, we are. I know exactly what you're thinking as you read this, Olav. You're thinking you'd love to see Garth get his own miniseries written and drawn by the multifaceted, multitaleanted Phil Jimenez... Well, you're lucky, 'cos this fall it'll be on the shelves of a retailer near you! (Told you I could read your mind!)

Dear Jason,

Re: SHOWCASE '96 #1

Collecting only the Superman line, I'm happy to see his supporting cast featured here again this year. On the other hand, I'm also glad to see them in team-ups this time around, since several of the previous installments fell a little flat. If nothing else, the pairings will give this book a separate identity from '95's. I was going to suggest cutting the book down to two features by expanding the lead (two heroes and all), but then I thought about variety being the spice of life, and... without further delay, my review (best to least best) of a slightly above average issue.

"Charted Courses." The fact that I do not follow AQUAMAN on a regular basis completely failed to spoil my enjoyment of this wonderfully basic Phil Jimenez script. The art by Scott Kolins was similarly simple, translating into clear and concise visuals. Congratulations to Scott on his rendering of Garth's black outfit. Not an easy task.

"Friends, Foes, and the Other Guys." While more of a Warrior story than Steel's, I still enjoyed it, even though (once again) I do not read Guy's book. The story, art, and villains strongly reminded me of a late '70s/early '80s Marvel book....er, let me rephrase that: a good '70s/'80s Marvel book. Nothing wrong with that.

"All the Old Familiar Places." Much better than I anticipated, people. It's always a treat to see Terrible Turpin solo, but it looks like he won't be that way much longer. About time. Scot Ciencin introduced a rather contrived-looking villainess with Tengu, but sidestepped (for the most part) that short-story trap by not allowing Overlord's sword to stop her. The Robinson/Nyberg art added a little polish to an otherwise boring setting. And by the way, Legion Run?

The cover: Excellent in-your-face design, but I've seen better execution in my

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day. Thank you for removing the lead feature's logo though. It isn't really needed, and with a team-up every issue, it could get a little busy.

Chris Hines
79B Centennial Dr.
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Glad you like where we're going so far, Chris. Hang on—it's just going to get wetter and wilder as the year goes on!

Jason—

First off—Sergio Cariello's pencils were not up to his usual standards. Was it the inking? Did he only provide layouts?

Now let's move on to one of my favorite DC characters—Aqualad. What is he called? Garth? Tempest? He needs a new name. Tempest (if this is his new name) just doesn't do it for me. He also needs a new costume.

Let's see more of Garth here. We need to learn about his new powers and his new role in the DCU. I'd love to see the Sharkgirl in his adventures. Let's have more adventures of Garth in SHOWCASE!

Ed Homa, Jr.
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All your wishes will come true this fall, Ed (trust me, I'm a mind reader); however, since we know a lot of you guys will keel over with anticipation before the miniseries even comes out, you can check out current and upcoming issues of AQUAMAN for more on Garth...a lot more on Garth.

Dear Metropolis C.S.U. (Case Studies Unit),

I've been looking forward to finding out the final fate of Aqualad for quite some time now. After his horrifying, mutilated exit from AQUAMAN #9, I was surprised to see that in "Charted Courses" he'd undergone a change for the better! In fact, Garth may need a code name now that this rite of passage has changed him from a boy to a man. I definitely like his new powers and mission, and I think I can get used to his new look (although the scars and short hair do remind me a bit of

Chakotay from TV's *Star Trek: Voyager*).

I had no idea that Phil Jimenez is a skilled writer as well as an artist. He did a fantastic job with the script, and Scot Kolins did an equally fantastic job with the art, making this my favorite story in this issue. For only ten pages, it had a lot of impact! I can't wait to see the new Garth confront Aquaman in his own title.

Likewise, "Terrible" Dan Turpin has been Maggie Sawyer's right-hand man in the S.C.U. for so long now, that it's time he got his share of the spotlight. "All the Old Familiar Places" was delightful because it showed Dan's tough exterior in fighting the lady demon Tengu while showing his sensitive interior as he dealt with his inner demons and his next-door neighbor, Nora. The art by Roger Robinson and John Nyberg, enhanced by colorist Roberta Tewes, was exceptionally good. It reminded me a lot of Rick Burchett's animated style in the BLACKHAWK series of some years back.

You can't have super-hero comics without slugfests and bar-room brawls, hence this issue's lead battle. I've always liked STEEL ever since his first appearance, and the conflict with the two guy Gardners has me interested. Throw in the steroid-overdosed Sledge along with Sergio Cariello and Rob Leigh's artwork, and you've got me looking forward to Part Two.

Since SHOWCASE '96 will concentrate on teaming Superman's supporting cast with other DC characters, I have only one request: Let's see The Thorn team up with The Batman! What do you think?

Till next issue,
Neill Ahlquist
Minneapolis, Minn.

What do I think? I think it sounds cool, although not as cool as a Thorn/Polson Ivy team-up...or a Thorn/Green Arrow team-up (which is what you're gonna get in two months as the lead feature in SHOWCASE '96)! All right, kiddies, that's it for this month. See you next time...

Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt
—Wishing the Sharkgirl were my Valentine...

NEXT ISSUE



Green Arrow and Thorn cross paths, and a child's life hangs in the balance, when a sniper takes aim at an airport in a story by Darren Vincenzo, Steve Erwin, and Gerry Fernandez. Plus, The Shade and the original Dr. Fate...in a story by James Robinson and Matt Smith, and in an untold tale of the New Gods, the dark secret behind the creation of the celestial city is revealed in a tale by Rachel Pollack, Jason Armstrong and Brian Garvey. All that and a cover by Mike Zeck!